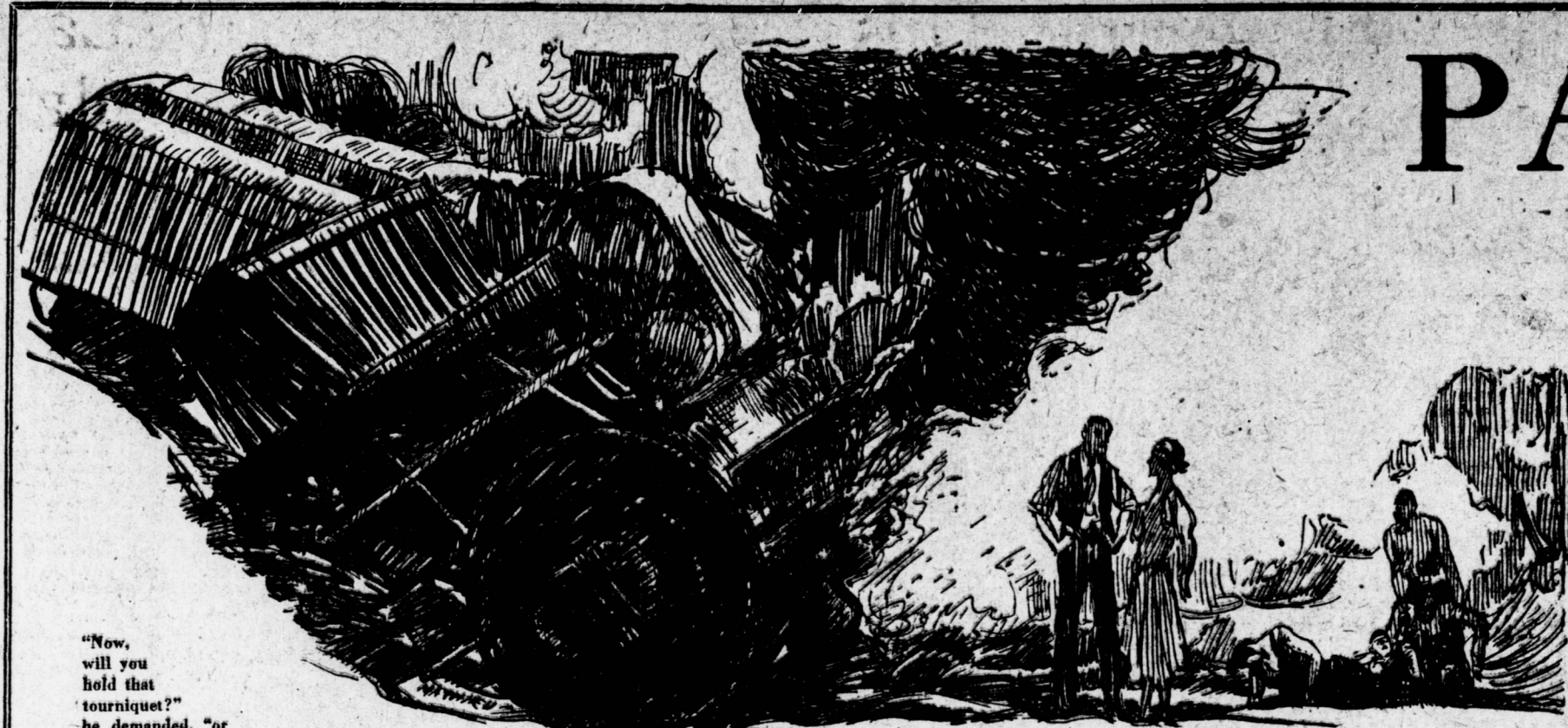


PATTY

Does the Modern Girl Always Know Her Own Mind?

By Inez Haynes Irwin



"Now, will you hold that tourniquet?" he demanded, "or have I got to kick you?"

THAT'S my diagnosis," Judge Dade conceded, looking up at the older of his two daughters, "a great deal of efficiency deflected into a lot of little abilities. And my first remedy's work and my second matrimony."

Patty Dade maintained her perch on the high arm of her father's chair, refusing to accept her diagnosis, she rejoined promptly, "I won't take your medicine. I've lost confidence in you, Judge Dade. You're fired! Besides—"

"Don't say your can't do anything," her father interrupted. "You proved you could work hard enough and efficiently enough during the war."

"Oh I can work hard," Patty Dade admitted, "only, father, I've no special talent. And somehow to work for mere work's sake—to take a job from some poor girl who needs it just to prove I don't have to be idle—well, it doesn't appeal to me—that's all."

"Then let's proceed to the second remedy," Judge Dade suggested. "Why don't you pick out some likely young chap, and marry him?"

"I think Patty's going to be an old maid," struck in Laurian Dade pessimistically.

Laurian was writing a letter at the desk near the window. Ordinarily her pretty seventeen-year-old face bore a grin. Now her expression was that of conscious superiority.

"When a girl shows no ambition but to beat men at games and sports, and to be considered the bravest person in the whole place—well I think that kind of girl soon loses all her attraction for men."

"That will do for you, miss," her sister cut in. "Plapper," she added scathingly. "You see, Julian, being your daughter has spoiled me for marriage. I solemnly promise you, though, when I find a man as handsome and able as entertaining as you are, I'll—but I can't find him. You're entirely responsible for my spinster state, Julian."

Judge Dade returned to the charge. "You're so choosy, Patty. There've been so many good lads calling here—"

"As for example," his daughter demanded. "Well, Jack Johns," Judge Dade answered instantly.

Patty elevated her nose. "Too high-brow."

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agreed, "and to such a boob! He is interesting, though—"

"How can a married man be interesting?" Laurian demanded, indignantly.

"Father," Patty answered her sister, obliquely, "I want to ask you one question. And don't spare me. Is it possible that at seventeen I was as silly as Laurian?"

"It always makes me wild," Laurian went smoothly on, "for a married man to ask me to dance. It's just a dance wasted."

"But I'm very impartial, father," Patty went on, talking through Laurian's treble. "I've tried every kind; bachelors, husbands, widowers. If they're married, they're misunderstood and if they're single there's nothing to understand about them."

"I tell you whom I'm perfectly mad over," Laurian interrupted. "It's Arthur Raeburn!"

"Arthur Raeburn?" Patty exclaimed.

"Had she been a boxer, you would have said that the look she turned on Laurian was her fighting face—so black was the flood that colored it, so bright her thick scowl. 'Where did you meet Arthur Raeburn?' she demanded, peremptorily."

"I haven't met him yet—but I'm dying to. All the girls are. He's got the most wonderful eyes—grey with long black lashes and they have the most gorgeous expression—sort of haughty and commanding and contemptuous and yet kind of insecure."

"Joyce Stater's measles. Joyce says he commands her so. It's just the most gorgeous expression—sort of haughty and commanding and contemptuous and yet kind of insecure."

"You are not to meet Arthur Raeburn, Laurian," Patty ordered, crisply, "or if you find it unavoidable, you are not to invite him to the house."

"I don't see why—Laurian was beginning indignantly, when 'Because I say so,' Patty came down crashingly on her. 'I have never liked Arthur Raeburn,' Patty continued, 'I—I hate him. I despise him.'"

"I don't see why you should despise him, Patty," her father interposed gently. "He's a splendid surgeon. His record in the war proves that. And that hospital he's establishing in North Belaise is going to be a vast benefit to the community."

"I despise him because he was a spy," she said, but relentlessly, "that strange darkness still on her brow, that strange sternness still on her lips."

"Well," Laurian said, "my letter's done. How I hate to write a broadsheet. But I'll write it. No, father, moved toward the door. 'Then, I hope I meet Arthur Raeburn in other people's houses,' she flung a vast defiance over her shoulder, as she fled through the hall. 'I'm simply crazy about him.'"

BETWEEN Patty and Judge Dade ensued a tiny interval of silence. Then his voice lowered a little. "It wasn't Monty Velle, was it, Patty?"

"No," she said, "it was Monty Velle. I was in the room when he was there."

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"I don't know why I'm wasting all this time on you and your weird ideas, Julian," Patty remarked with a severe infection, springing to her feet, "when I've got to get over to Belaise and do all my ordering this morning and then get into town and back by night. Don't bother about me, I've reconciled myself to being the old maid of the family."

She dropped a kiss on the exact spot on her father's head where his stiff, thick hair made a silvery whorl and departed.

She was whistling when she left the big shadowy library. And she was whistling later when she reappeared on the uncovered, brick-paved back piazza which by means of a terrace, formal garden, broken by pools and fountains, sloped in velvety gradations to the sea. She did not look at the sea, however. She looked at the sky. The whistling died down, for her eyes were full of tears. Suddenly her arm came high in a lovely lithe gesture as she threw a kiss up into the deserted eaves.

It was true that in his aviator's uniform, Monty Velle had been the handsomest thing she had ever seen. It was true, too, that her heart had been lightly touched by his debonaire comeliness. It was true also—she had known it even then—that he was weak, that she would always be the controlling spirit and that in consequence she was not really in love. That thrown kiss was a remorseful recognition of this condition.

Five minutes later, however, in her trim little roadster, she had become dry-eyed and serene. The road wound out of the big Dade place into the wide macadam main road of Ringfinger where correct estates, sumptuously architected and faultlessly groomed, threw curtains of gauze green away from the widening vistas of dazzling peacock sea of dunes.

Reaching the main road, the road merged with a dirt highway, meticulously rustic. This ran to the quiet, exclusive town of Belaise.

Lying back in her seat, her shapely hands resting lightly on the wheel, Patty seemed to steer the car by a kind of mental wireless—the while she dreamed back over her girlhood and childhood.

JULIAN DADE'S wife died when Patricia was seven. And ever since her seventeenth year Patricia had been her father's housekeeper. The daughter of a judge, nationally famous, the head of the biggest, best, wealthiest house in the Point, she achieved without effort an enviable social position.

Patty was the type of girl of which every community boasts at least one. Whenever Patty's little roadster chugged up to the post office at Belaise, conversation temporarily stopped in the groups gathered there; heads slowly pivoted; eyes furtively slipped in her direction. Followed comment—inspiring, questioning, admiring. Equally when Patty served at tennis, drove at golf, dived at swimming—started to dance—something about her attracted the gaze; arrested it; held it close prisoner.

As a child she had been the prodigy of her group. As a child and girl, her courage had been the wonder of her set. And as a woman—mothers complained that she was the first to import the soundest new fashions in clothes and dancing that trailed

THE machinery of Patty's vamping mill began to function instantaneously. She stowed up gradually, signalled with a pretty gesture for Arthur Raeburn to stop. The silver car came to a stand beside her roadster; but its driver did not shut off the gas. "How do you do, Dr. Raeburn?" Patty opened the conversation with her most charming accent. "When did you get back?"

"How do you do, Miss Dade. I've been back—oh, let me see—four or five months. Five to be accurate."

"I hadn't heard," Patty lied with a delicate malice. Then sweetly, "Were you in the war?"

"Not in the line. I was in the Red Cross."

"Oh, that must have been so much more interesting—"

Apparently, however, Dr. Raeburn did not get her intention. His absent gray eyes, set first under black lashes then a deep frown, were studying the distance, and his expression—

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"Not in the line. I was in the Red Cross."

"Yes, it was interesting," he vouchsafed, in a preoccupied tone. His fingers moved furtively on the wheel.

"What are you doing now?" was Patty's next thrust.

"Oh, I'm interested in a hospital over in North Belaise."

"I hadn't heard of it," Patty thrust again. "Is it a secret?"

Raeburn smiled. And his smile was a jag of light breaking through the tanned cream of his complexion.

"Not deliberately so," he replied. Then, "You must pardon me," he said with a courteous firmness, "but I must go on. I have a patient at the Point."

And before the outraged Patty could peep even a good-bye, the silver car was making for the horizon.

The rencounter had, however, accomplished one good. Even if it threatened to effect many ills, it had burned up Patty's melancholia.

In the whole course of her life, there had been but one person whom she hated—Arthur Raeburn. It was curious, too, that she should pick him to hate; for Arthur Raeburn's sphere revolved in a different system from hers.

He was curious about Arthur Raeburn. Jeered at by the boys, avoided by the girls, until he lived in a virtual ostracism. Arthur had on the whole turned out to be the most brilliant one among them. His record in the war—he had said that he was not in the line. But, as Patty perfectly well knew, he might just as well have been in the line. He had been a surgeon in a hot sector on the American front. The town riddled with stories of his coolness under bombardment. Now, he was not only an established local celebrity, but had the entire charge of a richly-endowed, perfectly-equipped new hospital which was to open in a week or two.

He had certainly improved as far as his looks were concerned. His gray, thick-lashed eyes were really beautiful—Patty found herself recalling one of Laurian's adjectives—commanding—and the flashing whiteness of that sudden smile—yes, there was something about him.

For an instant, Patty almost swerved from her purpose. Why not a flirtation? But on second thought she determined to be true to her hate; to see that he suffered.

SOME time just before the middle of the afternoon, Patty left the chair-car of a train which had brought her from the city of Carfax and changed into the dinky two-coached, jerk-water train which trundled passengers over ten miles of marsh to Belaise. The other half-dozed passengers made at once for the front car; but the experienced Patty took a seat well back in the second car, as far as she could get from the engine.

"The car was hot; Patty almost dozed, thinking of many uncorrelated things.

Something brought her idle drifting gaze back to the car—a movement up near the front—the phenomenon of a head rising suddenly above a seat back. She was not alone. A man sat there. Apparently he had followed her into the car—strange, she had not noticed him. The head disappeared again—he was very much occupied arranging something. She leaned down over her seat-end—he was packing together more than one man's burden of bags, suit cases, boxes. The head came up. It was Arthur Raeburn.

"I can't," she sobbed. "I can't!" "Shut up, you little fool!" he called crisply. "Of course you can! Wait until I get down." He started his own bundle over the side of the car. They slid with a clatter of stones to the bottom. He took her, one at a time, dropped them down.

OUT of the chorus of groans that came from below a masculine voice disappeared itself, called with a raucous hoarseness, "For mercy's sake, kill me somebody. I can't stand this. Can't anybody get a doctor?"

Instantly Raeburn answered the voice. "The doctor's here, my lad. You're all right. Keep a stiff upper lip! I'll be with you in an instant!" He turned to Patty. "Come here!" he ordered.

But involuntarily Patty had given a glance in the direction of the voice. Six strange folded things—brought out of the car apparently by the conductor—lay side by side—and the conductor himself, in a bloodied coat, beside them, was trying feebly to move an arm. It made an unnatural angle from the elbow. An

enormous gray void came swooping down upon Patty.

"Sit down, you fool, and slide!" Raeburn called.

She followed him from one to the other as he made his first examinations; followed him, for she did not dare to be alone; followed him with averted eyes for she dared not look at what he touched. He said things to her; things that at first she clung to.

"Two hours before we can get help—no roads across the marsh—the six train-lucky I brought supplies for the hospital—ether, spirits, gauze—"

She knew now that he was turning over that first strange human huddle. "The engineer's dead, poor fellow!" and then, "You jumped!" to the second one, "You're the fireman?"

"Yes, but I got it! Look, my leg's broken and torn. To think I went through the Argonne to have—"

Dr. Raeburn's voice was now saying to Patty, "I'll need you. Take off those gloves and your hat and veil. Well, conductor, you did a good job getting 'ix out of the car with that broken arm."

The conductor apparently understood, but he did not speak. His glazed eyes vaguely followed Raeburn's movements. One by one, Raeburn looked over the six, who lay stark and dead, his hand on their heads, his face turned the other way.

"Go back to the car, Miss Dade, and get me some water from the tank!" Dr. Raeburn ordered to the boy who had been pushing the car to the bridge. It lay sprawled below across the toy canon of the Micanne. On its side—half tilted on the bank, battered and smashed—lay the first car. Their own car, partially off the track, had been pushed back onto the bridge by the violent uncoupling which freed it from its fellow.

On the bank below, face down—blue-shirted arms and overalls legs and cap—lay one human thing. When Patty turned her head, another human thing was stirring in a feeble uncorrelated way. As through a dizzying humbness Patty stared at a doof of the protruding end in the end which lay over the bank, opened feebly. A uniformed man appeared in the aperture and with a nightmare-locked slowness threw it wide—pushed before him—

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She managed to inhibit her sobs. She followed him blindly. He managed under his burden to give her three fingers of assistance off the steps. Then he made toward the steep embankment.

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Patty thought herself tired, but the vamping machine began to stir vigorously. She took out the little mirror from her bag. Yes, she looked as crisp as when she started. She touched a powder pad to her nose. Her lips were just starting the first syllable of a beguiling "Doctor Raeburn" when—

A jerk that threw her forward until her head hit the seat in front—a jerk that threw her backward against her own seat—a crash—the huge smash of metal on rocks—a hideous grinding of wood—a jar—the hissing of steam—

Complete stillness of an instant. Then screams of terror—cries for help turned swiftly to yells of agony. Arthur Raeburn had leaped heavily half-way down the car, was becoming for the first time aware of her.

"You're perfectly safe, Miss Dade," he informed her instantly. "Wait!" he seemed suddenly a long way off. But Laurian's adjective came into that safe. Yes, his eyes were commanding. The sinister quiet of the world did not last. Out of it emerged a groan, quiet, smothered; low wails. Patty huddled in her seat and clamped her hands over her eyes. Raeburn passed her; jumped out of the car.

He returned in a moment; seized her arm. "Come!" he commanded again. "The train's jumped the track at the bridge. You're all right! Everything is all right." Patty felt this to be professional optimism and resented it; yet she clung to it. She clung to him, too, as gently he drew her by the back entrance out of the car and onto the road.

The engine had not only jumped the track, but it had jumped the bridge. It lay sprawled below across the toy canon of the Micanne. On its side—half tilted on the bank, battered and smashed—lay the first car. Their own car, partially off the track, had been pushed back onto the bridge by the violent uncoupling which freed it from its fellow.

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